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DAVIS, ARCENIA MARTIN. Portraits and Small Figures. (1977)

Directed by: Andrew Martin. Pp. 2.

The thesis consists of a group of realistic sculptures on exhibit at the Weatherspoon Gallery from April 24 through May 15. Color slides of the works are on file in the Walter C. Jackson Library at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

PORTRAITS AND SMALL FIGURES

by

Arcenia Martin Davis

A Thesis Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Fine Arts

Greensboro
1977

Approved by

Arcenia Martin
Thesis Adviser

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This thesis has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. I thank the members of my committee, for their wisdom, understanding, and sacrifice. I also thank Dr. Andrew Martin, my thesis adviser, for his valuable comments and criticisms, and the other members of my committee--Dr. John Gregory, Miss Susan Barkdale, and Dr. Carl Goldstein--for their advice and encouragement.

Thesis Adviser

Andrew Martin

Committee Members

Andrew Martin

John Gregory

Susan Barkdale

Carl Goldstein

April 14, 1977
Date of Examination by Committee

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I wish to express my appreciation to my husband, Roscoe, and to my children, Eric and Tifani, for their endless hours of patience, understanding, and sacrifice. I also thank Mr. Andrew Martin, my thesis adviser, for his valuable comments and criticisms, and the other members of my committee--Dr. Joan Gregory, Miss Susan Barksdale, and Dr. Carl Goldstein--for their advice and encouragement.

CATALOG

<u>Title</u>	<u>Medium</u>	<u>Date</u>
1. Self-Portrait: The Artist as a Dreamer	Plaster	Fall, 1976
2. Veronica Collins	Plaster	Fall, 1976
3. Eric	Plaster	Fall, 1976
4. Tifani	Plaster	Spring, 1977
5. Coming of Age	Ceramic	Spring, 1977
6. Spring	Ceramic	Spring, 1977
7. Reflections	Ceramic	Spring, 1977
8. The Secret	Ceramic	Spring, 1977

accompanied by the awakening of a new sensitivity to means of expression. My own approach has been first to look as closely as possible at a carefully treatment of the model. Next, there are decisions to be made concerning certain exaggerations and affirmations for the overall unity and rhythm of the whole. In the portrait busts, I want to present a calm and controlled exterior, with an "inner illumination" into the personality and emotions of the individual portrayed. I am striving for the ability displayed by the woman to reveal character, although with less hardness and austerity (perhaps with a slightly modified smile). With the figures, I am seeking a serenity from transparency, a kind of poetry of silence. The works should be imbued with an innate modesty and a half smile, half instinctive call of the soul. I have always admired the crystal-clear smiles and grace of Greek sculpture, the avoidance of mystery and complication. I also want to convey the Greek qualities of dignity, firmness, and repose.

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The body of work presented here remains faithful to a certain kind of classicism. It represents a return to the model--to the purely visual experience. The art world, as a microcosm of the world at large, seems to revolve in cycles. The beginning of the 20th century marked an attempt by artists to establish new aesthetic goals and to create for themselves a new plastic world. It is my belief that the 21st century will bring with it a reacclimatization of man to nature and experience. This change is simply part of the natural order of psychological and social evolution. I foresee a return to representation of the human body--the artist's principal medium ever since antiquity--accompanied by the awakening of a new sincerity in means of expression.

My own approach has been first to come as close as possible to a realistic treatment of the model. Next, there are decisions to be made concerning certain exaggerations and eliminations for the overall unity and rhythm of the whole. In the portrait busts, I want to present a calm and controlled exterior, with an "inner illumination" into the personality and emotions of the individual portrayed. I am striving for the ability displayed by the Romans to reveal character, although with less harshness and exactitude (perhaps with a slightly modified realism). With the figures, I am seeking a serenity from temperament, a kind of poetry of silence. The works should be imbued with an innate modesty and a half poetic, half instinctive calm of the soul. I have always admired the crystal-clear realism and grace of Greek sculpture, the avoidance of mystery and complication. I also want to convey the Greek qualities of dignity, firmness, and repose.

These works are executed on a small, personal scale. The themes center around those things which are real and meaningful to me-- children, old folks, good friends, and precious moments. The smooth, unbroken surfaces are dealt with in an honest and straightforward manner.

I have been able to identify with the calm and delicate restraint of Maillol's works, but while he has constructed a drastically simplified anatomical architecture, I find that scrupulous detail is important to me as a matter of conscience. I look to the realism of Donatello and Rodin in his earlier works, and to the grace and charm of Settignano and Messina. The works included here are from the hand of a deliberate and careful artist, calm and well-behaved, and full of sentimentality.